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SUBJECT: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH PRESIDENT MILLS

REF: STATE 120759

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Classified By: Ambassador Donald Teitelbaum for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador met with a relaxed and confident President Mills for 45 minutes on January 6. Mills promised cooperation on security issues and sought greater partnership, including a second body scanner for use at Kotoka Airport's VIP lounge. He expressed his concern about stability in Togo and Nigeria. Ambassador raised Kosmos Energy/Exxon-Mobil, drawing on Department talking points and followed up on previous discussions concerning Ghanaian desires for transport and maritime surveillance aircraft. President Mills expressed his willingness to meet with President Carter, Assistant Secretary Carson, and Millennium Challenge CEO Daniel Yohannes during their visits in early February. The President seemed confident about his upcoming party congress, noting that "If Jerry Rawlings is criticizing me publicly, I must be doing something right." He said the Party Congress would take place from January 15 - 17 as scheduled --with breaks for the participants to watch the Africa Cup of Nations. In a pull aside after the meeting, Foreign Affairs Advisor Victor Gbeho (a Rawlings loyalist) stated that Rawlings' faction had done poorly in recent local party contests and that, although there would be conflict at the convention, "the party will reunite afterwards." END SUMMARY.

12. (C) President Mills convoked the Ambassador on January 6. Just prior to the meeting, GOG officials waiting with the Ambassador were informed that it was a "private meeting" and they would not be needed. Mills was accompanied only by Chief of Staff John Henry Martey Newman and Foreign Affairs Advisor (and former Foreign Minister) Victor Gbeho. Mills was in a good mood and appeared energetic and in good health. He may have gained a few pounds over the holidays. Highlights of the conversation follow.

SECURITY AND NARCOTICS

13. (C) President Mills opened the meeting by raising the attempted bombing of Northwest Flight 253. He expressed his happiness that the attempt had failed and that the suspect is in custody. He pledged full Ghanaian cooperation to investigate the incident and noted that the Ghanaian Government is as interested as the US Government in knowing the full details of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's activities during his time in Ghana. The Ambassador noted that we had received excellent cooperation so far, but stressed that the FBI would need full access to ensure that any evidence obtained could be used in a US court.

14. (C) President Mills continued by thanking the US for

assistance in the provision of a body scanner for Kotoka Airport. He asked for assistance to ensure that the scanner is in use as soon as possible and stated that once it is in place, he would like to see it used on 100% of passengers. He then asked for assistance in procuring a second scanner to be installed in the VIP lounge of the airport. He noted that if a scanner were installed in the VIP lounge, he would allow himself to be scanned and insist that every other VIP do the same. NOTE: Post doubts it will be feasible to use the scanner (funded by INL and installed in a room funded by AFRICOM) for 100% of passengers, but are pleased that the GOG is motivated to use it. We expect to have it fully operational within a few weeks. The request for a second scanner for the VIP lounge merits strong consideration. Post has indications that the VIP lounge is a vulnerability for Ghana, particularly in terms of narcotics trafficking, but given Umar Farouk Abdulmutallib's travel through Ghana, the utility of body scanners for security purposes is clear. END NOTE.

TOGO, NIGERIA, AND REGIONAL STABILITY

15. (C) President Mills noted that he was "not happy about the situation in the region, pointing to Guinea, Niger, and Ivory Coast. Now, he added, they are increasingly concerned about violence and instability in Togo and Nigeria. Mills said that he believes that Togolese President Faure Gnassingbe wants to do the right things and "realizes that the path his father has led the country down is not the best path for Togo." The problem, however, is that he is surrounded by hardliners. Mills asserted that a key problem is the use of the "first past the post" electoral system in Togo which will be difficult for the opposition to accept. He suggested that a possible solution would be a compromise

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on a minimum percentage for victory --perhaps 45%. He noted that such a compromise would never be acceptable in Ghana, and that Ghana is strongly attached to its own law that requires a majority for victory, but that Togo's democracy is less developed and "politics is the art of compromise." The Ambassador noted that our Mission in Ghana does not have responsibility for Togolese affairs, but that Assistant Secretary Carson's early February visit would be a good chance to discuss the issue in detail. The President agreed and stated that he would like to meet with A/S Carson. Foreign Affairs advisor Gbeho stated that he had discussed the Togo situation with A/S Carson at length during his last visit to Washington, and found US views in line with those of Ghana. The proposal of a possible compromise on what would constitute an election victory was new, however.

16. (C) President Mills also noted that he was very worried about the lack of information on Yar Adua's health. He expressed his fear that the Vice President would be denied a constitutional transition and that the result could be instability and violence. He asked for any information Washington might be able to share on Nigerian President Yar Adua's health. Ambassador told him he would relay the request. After the meeting, Gbeho repeated Mills' concern, noting that "if just a million Nigerians come to Ghana as refugees it would be disastrous for Ghana."

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS CONVENTION

17. (C) When asked, President Mills confirmed that he expects the National Democratic Congress Party (NDC) Congress to take place from January 15 - 17 as scheduled. He did note, however, that since the Congress will coincide with the Africa Cup of Nations football tournament, breaks would be scheduled to allow participants to watch key matches rather than force delegates to choose between politics and football. Although the party congress is expected to be contentious, with Mills facing challenges from several factions, President

Mills seemed relaxed and confident. He preemptively brushed aside recent criticisms from former President Jerry Rawlings, noting that "If Jerry Rawlings is criticizing me publicly, I must be doing something right." After the meeting, Gbeho noted that Rawlings' candidates had done poorly in recent local party elections. Gbeho expected that there would be conflict at the convention, but that the party would be able to reunite afterwards. He stated that he expected that Rawlings' wife, Nana, would win one of the Vice Chairperson positions.

KOSMOS/OIL

18. (C) The Ambassador briefly raised oil development, drawing on points provided by the Department (REFTEL). The Ambassador noted that the situation was complex, but that movement on development of Ghanaian oil seemed to be slowing. It is critical that any resolution be within the rule of law and transparent. The world, and particularly potential investors, are watching. The Ambassador stressed that the respect for rule of law is one of our shared values and one of the advantages of doing business with American companies. Mills stated that "things are taking too long" and that he expected to see a resolution shortly. He stressed that Ghana would absolutely work transparently and within the rule of law.

AIRCRAFT SALES

19. (C) The Ambassador expressed his regret that the possible sale of C-27J Spartan transport aircraft to the Ghanaian military had gone by the wayside, but stressed that we want to see Ghana obtain appropriate equipment at the best possible cost. He added that the Mission was working with the military on other, lower-cost, options and continuing to explore possible aerial surveillance platforms as requested during the visit of President Obama.

HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS

10. (C) The Ambassador noted that early February would bring several high-level US visitors, including former President Carter, A/S for African Affairs Johnny Carson, and Millennium Challenge Corporation CEO Daniel Yohannes. Mills agreed to meet with all three during their visits.

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